SOCIAL CAPITAL, COMMUNITY AND CITIZENSHIP

AT THE

EVELEIGH RAILWAY WORKSHOPS IN SYDNEY,

1880-1932

THE UNIVERSITY OF
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INTRODUCTION

In 1854, a select committee of the Legislative Council of the New South Wales (NSW) Parliament met to consider what measures were needed to improve roads and introduce railways in the colony. In the same year, the Sydney Railway Company collapsed when the costs involved in constructing a railway line between Sydney’s city center and outlying district of Parramatta escalated. In these circumstances, the select committee concluded that private enterprises could not succeed in ventures of this nature without government aid and it therefore recommended that ‘these important works should be taken up by the Government’. The government, in turn, passed legislation to purchase the colony’s two railway companies and to take over railway construction from 1855. This set the pattern for Australia’s railways.\(^2\)

Workshops were initially established at the Redfern railway station which was intended to be the terminus for the city’s railways. Here, the first government-made locomotive was produced in 1870, although most construction was contracted to private firms operating in this inner-city industrial suburb. Five years later when this twenty-seven acre site proved inadequate, sixty-two acres were purchased nearby from the Chisholm Estate at Eveleigh for new workshops and in 1879 the NSW Parliament voted 356,000 pounds for the building and the purchase of new machinery. Construction began in 1880 and when it was completed around six years later, the site included locomotive workshops, running sheds, carriage and wagon shops, a paint shop and stores.\(^3\) During the 1890s, new erecting shops were built there and after the turn of the century further additions included shops for coppersmithing, tinsmithing, springmaking, potash washing, a spring store and a new foundry. By 1900, ten per cent of railway staff were employed at

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Eveleigh, the locomotive section with over 900 workers, and the Carriage and Wagon Section with 520. Immediately before the outbreak of World War One in 1914, when the New South Wales Department of Railways and Tramways had become one of the largest employers in Australia, Eveleigh represented the heart of the NSW transport system.

This paper focuses on the associations that developed between Eveleigh, those who were employed there and various labour movement organizations, which represented their interests. It does not, however, adopt an institutional approach for analyzing such associations. Instead, Eveleigh is treated as a landscape; a microcosm of social relations that reflects ‘cultural values, social behavior, and individual actions worked upon’ the surrounding localities ‘over a span of time.’ In turn, the concepts of citizenship, community and social capital are employed to explore themes of power and collective resistance within this landscape. This approach ensures that the experience of Eveleigh, as a place, is not ignored or trivialized.

The nature of the associations that evolved in this industrial landscape was, I argue, affected by the public ownership and economic significance of the railways, and reinforced by interlocking workplace, occupational, family, religious and neighborhood networks that underpinned the adjacent working class communities. Together, these networks and associations with labour movement institutions provided Eveleigh’s employees with social capital that enabled them to mobilize against changes to their conditions and pay, as well as new forms of technology that threatened their ability to exercise control over their work. It was this social capital that helped to produce an unusually high degree of civic engagement in the political sphere.

In short, Eveleigh was not only a geographic location in which specific industrial activities occurred, but also a ‘territory’ made up of a particular concentration of people and local allegiances. As such it constituted the epicenter of an occupational community because it encouraged residential concentration in the localities that surrounded it and thus produced a

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6 In Australia, ‘labor’ is used to refer to the Australian Labor Party and the Trades and Labor Council of New South Wales. Labour, on the other hand, refers to work, workers and the entire range of industrial institutions associated with the working class.


8 Zukin, *ibid.*, pp. 11-12, p. 19.
high degree of social interaction between fellow workers and their families. This was reinforced by extended kinship ties, intergenerational occupational continuity, and social, industrial and political organizations which provided multiple, often overlapping contexts for the formation of bonds and norms, as well as networks of collaboration. These dimensions of community and social capital were critical to the emergence of civic solidarity and collective action, which enhanced workers’ bargaining power vis-à-vis the state and bureaucratic authority.

In this regard, citizenship is central to Eveleigh as a landscape of power. As Ian Turner explained, whereas industrial organizations, notably trade unions, are primarily concerned with wages and conditions of labour and engage in actions such as strikes, boycotts and the withdrawal of industrial efficiency, ‘political organizations combine workers in their character as citizens and as voters’, to the extent that they engage in electoral campaigning, pressure group and parliamentary activity. In Australia, workers’ stock of social capital and their ability to mobilize collectively relied on both sorts of organizations mainly because of the symbiotic relationship that developed between the industrial and political wings of the Australian labour movement during the closing decades of the nineteenth century.

CITIZENSHIP, COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL CAPITAL

Citizenship provides an extremely useful tool for exploring how Eveleigh workers mediated the contradiction between ‘real inequality in the market’ and ‘the formal equality promised by the civic contract of modern democracies ruled by universal suffrage’ by mobilizing to influence government policies on industrial matters. It is particularly pertinent to a public enterprise like Eveleigh partly because it involves what Ignatieff refers to as an active mode, such a running for political office, voting, political organizing, and a passive mode in the form of entitlements to rights and welfare, and partly because of its traditional association with the state. As the paper demonstrates, those who worked at Eveleigh exercised both forms of citizenship by lobbying for legislation that increased their entitlements to employment, freedom of association and greater access to public resources as a result of a belief that it was the state’s duty to protect

10 Zukin, Landscapes of Power, pp. 16-19.
basic civil and political rights. This view reflected the important part played by citizenship in the formation of the Australian labour movement during the middle decades of the nineteenth century, when colonial workers’ became involved in struggles for colonial self-government and for an Eight Hour Day.

Prior to the 1840s the bulk of the country’s inhabitants were convicts, the state was despotic and the citizenry formed a minuscule proportion of the population. In the ensuing two decades, manhood suffrage and representative government were, according to Davidson, ‘grafted onto this past and its structures’. Against the backdrop of economic changes fostered by the gold rushes, which began in 1851, the transfer of state power from Britain resulted in self-government in 1856. During the same period, the Eight Hour Day movement became a ‘crucible of working class politics’. It affirmed citizenship and solidarity for the members of Australia’s early trade unions, who pursued shorter working hours by engaging in strikes and annual demonstrations throughout the 1860s and 1870s. Eight hour committees played an important part in the formation of trade unions and the Sydney Trades and Labor Council (TLC) during the 1870s and 1880s and the Australian Labor Party (ALP) during the early 1890s. Together, these organizations shaped ‘the kind of political game’ that Australian workers engaged in.

The connection between citizenship, the labour movement and Eveleigh was itself predicated on the growth in public capital formation that occurred after colonial governments became actively involved in the construction and operation of railways and subsequently, tramways, postal and telegraph systems. As Connell and Irving point out, in the context of increased state intervention and enterprise, working class leaders recognized that they could not operate permanently outside the organizations of the state. This situation ‘did not demobilise the working

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class’, they argue, ‘it reinforced its level of mobilisation’. The resulting laborist orientation of union leaders and politicians ‘centered on the presumption that the State could act as a defensive agent, able and willing to protect workers’ interests’ from exploitation.

The eight hour committees, the trade unions, TLC and the Labor Electoral Leagues, which became part of the Labor Party, were all critically important in providing institutional structures for active citizenship by Eveleigh’s workers. At least sixteen of them became Labor Members of the NSW and national parliaments, following periods of involvement with these industrial and political organizations. And although the majority of Eveleigh’s employees played a far less prominent political role, they did successfully exercise their voting rights. For this reason Labor politicians, such as J.T. Lang, who was Premier of NSW during the 1920s and early 1930s and Jim Scullin, Australia’s Labor Prime Minister during the early 1930s, organized election rallies in the workshops’ vicinity. Such political participation was fundamentally related to Eveleigh’s workplace culture and its role as a hub for the neighboring working class communities. In short, Eveleigh’s employees were able to combine both active and passive forms of citizenship because of the way that their formal and informal networks consolidated connections between the occupational community associated with this workplace and the institutions of the labour movement.

The concept of community has been disparaged by many social scientists. As Macintyre pointed out, it has been, ‘used and abused in a seemingly endless variety of contexts’, often serving ‘as a cant word’ to conjure ‘up a nostalgic closeness and attachment where these qualities patently do not exist.’ Nevertheless, community does provide a useful category of analysis for exploring ‘the fullness of social and political relations’ in a particular locality. It

highlights the formal and informal organizations, networks and bonds that help to produce shared interests and collective identities.\textsuperscript{22} And it:

- throws into prominence the tensions between senses of belonging which form ties between individuals and groups and between peoples and places.
- It is not that it enables us to identify a stable or a dominant set of social and cultural characteristics by which a particular place or a group of people might be identified. Rather, community focuses interest on the processes that create a sense of stability from a contested terrain \textsuperscript{23}

These aspects of community have much in common with E.P. Thompson’s definition of class as a historical relationship in which some people are united by common experiences and shared identities and interests, which distinguish them from others 'whose interests are different from (and usually opposed to) theirs.' The experience of class, according to Thompson, 'is largely determined by the productive relations into which' people 'are born or enter involuntarily', while class consciousness relates to 'the way in which these experiences are handled in cultural terms: embodied in traditions, value-systems, ideas and institutional forms.'\textsuperscript{24}

However, group identity and some degree of group-consciousness, the sharing of interests, experiences and traditional practices, as well as involvement with the same institutions are equally as important to communal formations. Such integrating tendencies provide sources of unity that not only enable industrial, but also social and political action and collaboration.\textsuperscript{25}

As the rest of the paper demonstrates, Eveleigh provided a lived space in which a multiplicity of social relationships and networks, that were both internal and external to it, overlapped. Recruitment policies that encouraged the employment of family groupings, limited transport services that forced employees to live in close proximity to the works and the politics of

\textsuperscript{22} Macintyre, \textit{ibid.}, pp. 176-95.
\textsuperscript{23} George Revill, 'Reading Rosehill: Community, Identity and Inner-City Derby', in Michael Keith & Steve Pile (eds), \textit{Place and the Politics of Identity}, Routledge, London, 1993, p. 120.
public enterprise, particularly in the context of Labor governments, produced connections between employment, community activities, industrial mobilization, and political behavior.26 The concept of social capital is the third analytical device that can be effectively employed to identify the nature of these connections precisely because it provides a conceptual bridge between community and citizenship. Social capital, according to Onyx is the ‘raw material of civil society. It is created from the myriad of everyday interactions between people’ that rely on and sustain networks, norms and trust, and in turn, facilitate spontaneous co-operation for mutual benefit.27 Indeed, according to Putnam, trust lubricates such cooperation both in close-knit communities where it is personal and rests on intimate familiarity, and in larger more complex modern settings where it tends to be less direct. The transformation of personal trust into social trust, Putnam argues, requires norms of reciprocity and networks of civic engagement.28 Both of these sources of social trust, I suggest, were critically important in shaping the industrial and political mobilization of Eveleigh’s workers from the closing decades of the nineteenth century until the early 1930s.

What are norms of reciprocity and in what way are they connected to networks of civic engagement? Such norms can be specific, in the sense that they involve simultaneous exchange of items of equal value. Or they can be generalized in cases of continuing relationships where mutual expectations exist that benefits granted at one point in time will be repaid in the future. Generalized norms of reciprocity are said to be most effective when they are associated with dense networks of social exchange because these promote information flows about trustworthiness. The confidence that results from such information not only increases trust and conformity to norms but also reconciles self interest and solidarity by restraining opportunism. Networks of civic engagement are critical to this process, whether they are formal or informal, horizontal or vertical. Putnam argues, however, that horizontal networks based on kinship, neighborhood associations, trade unions and mass-based parties are more important to civic engagement than vertical ones because they are more likely to foster ‘robust norms of reciprocity’ and encourage co-operation and community cohesion. In turn, successful co-operation provides ‘a culturally-defined template

26 Interview with Stan Jones conducted by Lucy Taksa, Sydney, 8 September 1983; Interview with Stan Jones conducted by Russ Herman in 1988 on behalf of the Combined Railway Unions Cultural Committee’s Oral History Project.
for future collaboration’ that is then available for addressing new problems of collective action.

How do these dimensions of social capital relate to the exercise of citizenship by Eveleigh’s employees and to their community ties? The rest of this discussion considers how networks of civic engagement and norms of reciprocity operated among Eveleigh employees. By focusing on the strong ties of kinship and friendship that formed around the workshops and the surrounding neighborhoods, the local churches and hotels, as well as the ‘weak ties’ of acquaintanceship and affiliation with secondary associations, such as trade unions, the TLC and the ALP, I show how Eveleigh’s occupational community was able, more often than not, to transcend a variety of social cleavages. The resulting cohesion not only encouraged wider cooperation that bolstered civic engagement, but also exerted a powerful influence on the performance of Labor governments and, as a corollary on the welfare state. In other words, the social capital that was available to those who worked at Eveleigh or lived in its vicinity was intimately connected to the political realm.

POLITICS AND NETWORKS OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AT THE EVELEIGH WORKSHOPS

The importance of the railways to the pastoral, engineering, iron and later, steel industries and the community’s demand for efficient commuter transport services meant that the Railways and Tramways Department was continuously affected by broader political and economic imperatives. The railways’ demand for carriages, goods wagons, and locomotives provided opportunities for private metal manufacturing and engineering firms, while the continuing expansion of transport infrastructure extended labour market opportunities for skilled craft-workers who were primarily engaged in repair and overhaul work in the government workshops.

Public ownership of transport infrastructure and services subjected railway management to political intervention, while constraining its actions by legislative requirements, such as were imposed by the *Trade Union Act* of 1881, the *Civil Service Act* of 1884, the *Civil Service Amendment Act* of 1886 and the *Railways Act* of 1888. Management strategies were also affected by the need to recruit and keep highly skilled workers, organize an extremely large number of staff, which performed a great variety of jobs, and also control labour costs so that the demands on consolidated revenue would not be great. In 1890 the permanent railway workforce had reached 11,827 and the following year, despite a slight reduction, railway employment accounted for 4.5 per cent of total male employees in NSW. To deal with this workforce, the Department evolved a centralized bureaucratic structure, incorporating an elaborate promotional hierarchy and an extensive body of regulations to govern workers’ behavior which was supplemented by welfarist practices.33

From the outset railway workers appealed to parliaments to redress their grievances, a strategy that not only exploited ‘the tension between railway management and the government’ but also established a basis on which they would actively contest, negotiate and accommodate state power, in accordance with prevailing circumstances.34 Such civic engagement drew on networks that were formed with politicians who were sympathetic to labour concerns, as a result of shared understandings of class interests. These men raised railway workers’ problems, presented their petitions and introduced resolutions on their behalf in the NSW parliament. Throughout the 1870s, this sort of co-operation was encouraged by the government’s intervention into the running of the railways. Railway workers responded by forming temporary combinations to exploit political patronage in appointments and when the Parkes Ministry decreased their pay in 1871, they launched a sustained campaign of lobbying that resulted in an increase two years later.35

The interpersonal workplace and union networks that enabled such co-operation also extended beyond the railways during the 1870s as a result of the eight hour day movement in which


35 Patmore, *ibid.*, pp. 18-19, pp. 24-5.
railway employees were active participants. In this regard, the formation of the NSW Trades and Labor Council (TLC) in 1871, was critical to railway workers civic engagement not only because of its campaign for shorter hours but also because of its role as the ‘guardian of the broad principle of unionism’. By assisting affiliates and non-affiliates in disputes with employers and mediating between government and unions involved in public works and enterprises, it reinforced associations and norms of generalized reciprocity between railway employees, sympathetic politicians and also workers from other industries. Within two years of its creation, it lobbied for shorter hours in the railways. In turn, those employed in the railway workshops, together with those in the iron trades, responded by being the first to attempt to implement TLC policy on the eight hour day. While railway unions generally remained unaffiliated during the 1880s, the Sydney Branch of the engine-drivers’ union, which had members in the workshops, began to favor affiliation from 1884. This development was tied to changes in material conditions related to the growth of more capital intensive industries, reduced opportunities for social mobility, increased threats to wages and conditions, the consolidation of class relations and the rapid expansion and amalgamation of trade unions. Fifty unions covering 30,000 workers in 1885 grew to over one hundred covering 60,000 by 1891, while affiliations to the TLC more than doubled to 20,000 between 1885 and January 1890. By June of that year affiliations had reached 35,000 members, or 63.85 per cent of unionists in the colony.

These networks of civic engagement were underpinned by dense interpersonal networks within the railway service which relied on family ties and shared experiences of work and productive relations. Railway employment was extremely popular because it offered security, fringe benefits, such as free railway passes and paid holidays, as well as relatively good pay, prestige and the opportunity for promotion. Many families therefore sought apprenticeships with the NSW Department of Railways and Tramways for their sons. As in the USA and England, it soon became traditional for sons of employees to follow their fathers into the railways.

At the same time, railway employment involved long hours and often dangerous conditions. Prior to the 1880s, workers dealt with these conditions by forming social groups and benefit societies to fulfill social, recreational needs and industrial exigencies resulting from work-based accidents and deaths. Initially, too, they responded to management's strict disciplinary code by joining together, on an ad hoc basis, to oppose wage cuts and to reduce hours of work. During the 1880s the general growth of unions spread to the railways. In 1883 the Locomotive Engine-drivers’ and Firemen’s Association was formed, followed by the Guards’ and Shunters’ Association and the Signalmen’s Union in 1885. Some unions, like those that represented boilermakers and engine drivers and firemen began making claims on behalf of members at the locomotive workshops, particularly for a closed union shop. In 1886, the Railway and Tramway Employees Association, which had formed earlier in 1879, was reorganized as the Amalgamated Railway and Tramway Service Association (ARTSA). The unpaid secretary of the formative body, William Francis Schey was a leading participant in this process.\(^{39}\)

Schey’s career highlights the connections that emerged between industrial networks and citizenship. It also sustains Markey’s proposition that railway workers came to terms with politics at a very early stage not only because their collective bargaining involved them in lobbying, but also because from the 1880s ‘concentrations of railway labour, including navies, in particular electorates …. became an important consideration in the formation of governments and their maintenance of parliamentary support.'\(^{40}\) During his term as the first (paid) General Secretary of the ARTSA, Schey mounted an extensive recruitment campaign that increased the union’s membership to forty per cent of the railway and tramway service. A year later, in 1887, he was elected to the NSW Legislative Assembly for the Seat of Redfern (which included Eveleigh) on the vote of his fellow-railway workers, thus illustrating the power of the ‘railway vote’. Throughout his period in the NSW Parliament, Schey reciprocated this support by continually raising issues of concern to railway workers. He strongly supported the *Government Railways Act*, which was passed in 1888 to eliminate political interference in the railways and between 1887 and 1897 he unsuccessfully introduced an Eight Hours Bill on nine separate occasions. His concentration on railway workers’ concerns was rewarded in the 1894 election


when he won the Seat of Darlington for the Labor Party, an electorate bordering on the Eveleigh workshops which was extremely poor, congested and dominated by the working class Irish.\textsuperscript{41}

J.S.T. McGowan, a devoted trade unionist whilst employed as a boilermaker at the railway workshops between 1875 and 1891, also played an important part in forging such norms of reciprocity. In his role as a union delegate he helped to gain a closed shop for boilermakers without a major dispute. He then joined the TLC executive between 1888 and 1891, at which time he was also the President of the Eight Hour Day Demonstration Committee. In 1891 he was the only official Labor Electoral League (ALP) candidate for a Redfern seat, which he won. From then, until 1917, McGowan represented this electorate in the NSW Parliament, living in its heart and playing an active part in the community. He formed a district cricket competition in place of existing exclusive club competitions and he was the Superintendent of the Sunday School at St. Paul’s Anglican Church, a position he retained for thirty-two years.\textsuperscript{42}

The careers and political behavior of both these men demonstrate that the exercise of citizenship by railway employees relied on overlapping networks of civic engagement which produced norms of generalized reciprocity and social trust in the broader working class community. As Scates puts it, ‘[t]he first Labor members were swept into parliament on a great tide of popular enthusiasm’. By ‘rekindling hopes’ that had been crushed by the Maritime Strike of the early 1890s, they ‘galvanized the energies of work site and neighbourhood, home and community.’\textsuperscript{43}

The TLC played an important part in this regard, particularly because of its links to the eight hour movement and its central role in the creation of the ALP. The symbiotic relationship between these two organizations ensured that workplace, union and political networks overlapped with each other and converged with social networks, because Party meetings were not only held in workplaces and union offices but also in local pubs. These interlocking networks thus strengthened railway workers’ struggles to attain union recognition, the eight-hour day and minimum rates of pay, as well as other benefits.\textsuperscript{44}

\textsuperscript{44} Markey, In Case of Oppression, p. 5; Patmore, A History of Industrial Relations, pp. 52-63; Scates, A New Australia, p. 9, p. 85.
In the Eveleigh workshops specific norms of reciprocity were forged by strong interpersonal ties based on craft traditions, proximity due to spatial and administrative arrangements and the permanent nature of much workshop employment. In 1904, the Royal Commission appointed to inquire into the possibility of locomotive construction either by government or private enterprise found that informal output norms operating in both sectors were formally sanctioned by unions, which had been able to prevent employers from introducing piecework and bonus systems.\textsuperscript{45} Labor politicians generalized such specific norms of reciprocity by appearing before this inquiry on the workers’ behalf. In particular, McGowan supported the workers antipathy to piecework and bonus systems by referring to his earlier opposition to them, whilst the Secretary of the Boilermakers’ Society. He also defended the guarantee given by Robert Howe, the Secretary of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, that unionists at Fitzroy Dock and Eveleigh would ‘avoid any labour disturbance for the next five, six, or seven years’, and would not demand pay increases if contracts for the manufacture of locomotives were granted to these government workshops without changes being made to existing conditions.\textsuperscript{46} Such collaboration was reinforced by networks with peak bodies like the TLC.

Between 1903 and 1905, when the Railway Commissioners refused to recognize railway unions or meet with TLC officials, the latter actively lobbied NSW governments for the expansion of the railway workshops. This, at the very time when the ARTSA had became one of the largest of the Council’s affiliates. Against the backdrop of the 1904 State election, when the ALP’s overall vote increased to twenty-three per cent, the TLC’s campaign for domestic construction of railway rolling stock, preferably by state enterprise, attained positive results. The 1904 Royal Commission Report recommended manufacture at Eveleigh on the grounds that the workshops’ machinery, plant and staff could be effectively adapted to the task.\textsuperscript{47} The Government, however, opted for a more cost-effective and politically expedient solution. It granted a contract for the manufacture of sixty locomotives to the Clyde Engineering Company, while Eveleigh was ordered to produce fifteen.\textsuperscript{48}


\textsuperscript{46} McAllister, Roberts, Nutt, Woodroffe, Thow, \textit{ibid.}, pp. 13-14


\textsuperscript{48} Railway Development in Relation to the Mechanical Branch 1855 to 1955, unpublished manuscript, n.d., SRAA B271, p. 3.
Networks of civic engagement that built on weak ties between the TLC and railway unions were extended by the affiliation of railway unions to the ALP. The latter associations sustained norms of reciprocity, enhanced the unions’ bargaining power vis-à-vis the state and encouraged the active citizenship of Eveleigh workers, particularly after the Labor Party’s polling at the 1907 State election increased substantially and even more so after it won the 1910 election. According to Nairn, McGowan’s leadership of the Party played an important part in securing this victory because he ‘assured voters that progress with the party would be judicious and safe.’ In fact, as Labor’s first Premier of NSW, McGowan demonstrated his trustworthiness when his government rapidly moved to authorize the duplication of railway lines throughout the State. In 1912 the McGowan Government also responded to demands made by Eveleigh’s mechanics for an inquiry into the comparatively greater number of orders for locomotives that were being placed with private enterprise. It appointed a Royal Commission to consider whether Eveleigh could meet future locomotive requirements, despite contrary demands for imports from Britain that were being made by some railway administrators. During the course of his investigation Justice Blacket found that the combination of repair and reconstruction activities with the manufacture of new engines, since 1907, had only been made possible by overtime and night shifts. He therefore concluded that with further extensions and alterations, 'the locomotive requirements of the State railways could be fully met by the State railway works', which by this stage covered twenty-six hectares and employed 3,270 people.

The McGowan Government’s attempt to fulfill this recommendation and its negotiations with the Chief Railway Commissioner for an eight shilling per day minimum rate, eight hours maximum work per day and one month holiday after twenty years of service for all of the Department’s employees, established a continuing relationship of exchange with the workers who supported it. The election of the State's first Labor Government with its emphasis on local production, according to Burke, assured 'Eveleigh's role as a builder'. Such collaboration

53 *The Co-Operator*, 4 April 1912.
certainly owed much to industrial and political networks of civic engagement that emanated from the workshops. Of equal importance was the social capital that existed in the working class communities that surrounded Eveleigh.

**COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL CAPITAL**

The social capital that was available to Eveleigh’s employees was not based solely on ties formed at work or through labour movement organizations. It was also spatially grounded in the localities that surrounded the Eveleigh workshops. Biographical profiles of three Eveleigh employees who became Labor politicians are particularly useful for highlighting how norms of reciprocity were ‘inculcated and sustained by modeling and socializing’ not only in the workplace but also in the family and the community where overlapping neighborhood, religious, occupational and political associations provided multiple contexts for civic engagement.55

Born in 1891, William John McKell attended school in close proximity to the workshops where he gained employment as a boilermaker between 1913 and 1914. In the interim, he was strongly influenced by McGowan who led McKell’s Sunday School classes. Like the former, McKell became an active member of the Boilermakers’ Society during his apprenticeship, representing it at the TLC and the Eight Hour Committee and becoming the Assistant Secretary between 1915 and 1917. In the latter year, McKell received Labor’s endorsement as the Member for Redfern in place of McGowan who was expelled from the ALP because of his support for conscription during a referendum held the previous year, an issue that caused a major split in the Party particularly between Labor parliamentarians and rank-and-file members. By attaining over sixty-six per cent of the vote McKell won one of the safest Labor seats in Australia at the age of twenty-five. A confirmed social democrat, he continued to represent this locality in the NSW Parliament, particularly as a Minister in various State Labor Governments between 1920-1922, 1925-1927, 1930-1932 and in his capacity as Premier and Treasurer in the period 1941-1947.56

From the beginning of his political career, McKell had an important affect on the working class community surrounding Eveleigh. Stan Jones recalled when McKell initially stood for

55 Putnam, Making Democracy Work, p.171.
Parliament in 1917 because the latter came to address a night-time meeting in Wells Street, which was adjacent to the workshops and where Jones lived. McKell’s speech to the locals from the Jones family’s kitchen table, which had been placed ‘underneath a lamp-post’, created great excitement in the neighborhood. As Nairn suggests and Jones verifies, McKell ‘was a very well-known and popular politician’, who ‘kept his feet on the ground in Redfern’ by continuing to live there for forty years from the time he moved there with his family in 1904. Sensitive to the importance of community support for Labor’s electoral success, McKell and his wife maintained an open house for constituents. By doing so they helped to create ties of acquaintenceship which fed norms of reciprocity and in turn encouraged civic engagement and a public-spirited citizenry.

The stock of social capital that was available to the occupational community surrounding Eveleigh was itself underpinned by spatially grounded networks of civic engagement based on the ties of kinship, neighborhood, ethnicity, religion and shared recreational activities. Eveleigh’s sheer size, however, ensured that this community extended beyond Redfern to other suburbs which encircled it, like Chippendale and Surry Hills to the east, Darlington, Camperdown and Newtown to the north and west, and Alexandria and Waterloo to the south. By 1891, all these areas had become industrialized and overtly working class in their demographic profile. In Camperdown and Darlington, ‘the streets were narrow and the terraces mean’, while in Newtown, Redfern, Waterloo and Alexandria slum housing had existed from the 1870s. By 1891, moreover, population density in these suburbs had more than doubled from twenty years previously. Redfern’s per centage of population per acre increased from 14.5 to 46.9 per cent, while Darlington increased from 25 to 61.9 per cent.

Many who lived and worked in these districts shared more than just common employment. In 1891, the Irish made up over eight per cent of each of the suburbs of Darlington, Redfern, and Waterloo, while the Catholic population of the latter two suburbs accounted for over twenty-seven per cent in each, figures that were greater than the metropolitan average. Those Catholics who lived in Camperdown and Darlington made up over twenty-five and twenty-four per cent respectively. According to Fitzgerald:

57 Interview with Stan Jones, 1983.
In so far as Catholicism corresponded to low status, a redistribution of religious affiliation in favour of Catholicism and away from Protestantism may be taken as an indication that a suburb had become more working class in composition.\textsuperscript{60}

This demographic profile was replicated in the political arena.

According to Nairn, during the late nineteenth century, Catholics became increasingly associated with Labor, a trend that became more pronounced in 1910, when sixteen of those elected to government were Catholic. Following the Labor Party split in 1916, over conscription, this tendency was confirmed. Before it, seventeen of the forty-seven Labor Members in the NSW Legislative Assembly, or 36 per cent, were Catholics. Afterwards eleven of the twenty-four, or 46 per cent, ‘were of the faith’. At the 1917 elections, this figure increased further to eighteen out of thirty-three or 54 per cent.\textsuperscript{61}

Besides ties of ethnicity and religion, bonds of kinship provided another important feature of this community’s social capital, as the case of Stan Jones cogently illustrates. Most of Stan’s male family members worked at Eveleigh, beginning with his grandfather who gained employment there as a molder after arriving in Australia from England during the 1890s. When Stan went there in 1925, he joined his father who was a boilermaker, and his uncle and cousins who were molders and machinists. The occupational structure reflected in this family was typical of these suburbs which were dominated by blue collar workers and more specifically ‘miscellaneous’ skilled workers.\textsuperscript{62}

Neighborhood networks were fundamentally affected by such overlapping family, class and workplace networks. Again, Stan Jones provides a good case in point. Like his father, Jones was born in Redfern where he lived with his family in Wells Street. His aunt lived next door, while his grandfather and other members of his extended family lived in Eveleigh Street, almost immediately behind. Because recruitment at Eveleigh often relied on kin ties and the railways were the district’s major employer, this family grouping was representative of the area.\textsuperscript{63}

At the same time overlapping networks, coupled with dense occupation, fostered a high degree of informal interaction among neighbors. As Jones put it, ‘people knew each other and people used to fraternize as neighbors considerably’, which he thought was probably assisted by the

\textsuperscript{60} Fitzgerald, \textit{ibid.}, p.34, p.43, p.47. Figures taken from the NSW Census, 1891, pp. 370-7, pp. 446-53.
\textsuperscript{63} Interview with Stan Jones, 1983; Fitzgerald, \textit{Rising Damp}, p. 30.
large numbers of Irish in the vicinity. This view was reiterated by McKell who recalled regular gatherings of neighbors during the festive season in the home of an Irish family in Young Street, Redfern. Such interaction was critical to the formation of specific and generalized norms of reciprocity. ‘Everyone helped everyone, there was unity, helpfulness and friendliness,’ commented McKell, while Jones stressed:

there was no question in those days of anyone being in need and not being helped by a neighbor. Resources were limited but people would come in and talk to you if anyone was sick and someone would make a bowl of soup and bring it to the person that was ill.

Co-operation of this nature clearly relied on personal trust. It also promoted the emergence of social trust.

Occupational ties not only overlapped with those based on kinship and residence, but also those formed by shared recreational practices at local hotels, which Jones suggested were often run by Irish people. Each section of the Eveleigh workshops favored drinking in specific pubs because ‘where people worked, they would patronize hotels nearby’. On the northern side of the shops and railway line, those employed on ‘the carriage side tended to go to the hotels on Abercrombee Street’ in Redfern. The hotels in the heart of Redfern and Waterloo, on the other hand, attracted the patronage of those employed on the eastern and southern side in the locomotive works, erection sheds and foundry. However, socializing at hotels was not restricted to Eveleigh workers. According to Jones, ‘people used to go into the local pub and groupings would organize a drag picnic’. This recreational activity helped to overcome sectional networks based on Eveleigh’s occupational and spatial arrangements because it involved loading a horse-drawn double-decker bus with people and beer and going fishing or playing cricket or coits with teams from other pubs.

Churches also played a role in reinforcing this high degree of community interaction. Even though Jones described his family as ‘careless’ Catholics, he stressed the important part played by the churches in ‘bringing people together’, not just for religious but also for recreational activities. According to McKell, St. Xaviers’ church in Redfern was ‘a meeting place’. It organized dances and a football club for its own religious group, much like other churches in the adjacent suburbs. And while informants attest to the existence of a certain amount of

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64 Interview with Stan Jones, 1983.
65 Interview with McKell, 1983.
66 Interview with Stan Jones, 1983.
67 Interview with Stan Jones, 1983.
sectarianism, they stress that the dense, segregated horizontal networks extended beyond particular religious communities because church football clubs participated in district competitions which cut across religious social cleavages. In McKell’s words, ‘it didn’t matter whether you were Protestant or Catholic or calathumpian as long as you could play football’.68

Networks forged by secondary associations, such as trade unions, the TLC and Labor Party branches intersected with these communal-based networks of civic engagement and encouraged active citizenship by Eveleigh employees as is demonstrated by the case of J.J. Cahill, who became Minister for Public Works in McKell’s Government during World War Two and Premier of NSW in 1952.69 The son of a railway worker, J.J. Cahill was born of Irish immigrant parents in Redfern in 1891 where he also went to school at the Patrician Brothers college. Apprenticed as a fitter at Eveleigh in 1906 at the age of 15, he soon became a branch officer of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers and a delegate at union conferences. In March 1917 he stood as the official ALP candidate for the seat of Dulwich Hill which he failed to win. He therefore continued to work for the NSW Railways and Tramways Department until later that year when he was sacked for his involvement with the NSW general strike, which began in the Department’s workshops in August of that year.70

Eddie Ward, whose father was a fettler employed on the tramways and a ‘staunch supporter of the Labor Party’, had similar occupational, kinship, neighborhood and labour movement networks. He, more than any other of the Eveleigh workers who were destined to political life illustrates Scates’ point that ‘the meaning of citizenship was enmeshed in wider social networks, the structures of the workplace and community, the family and the street.’71 Born in 1899 in Darlington, Ward gained his first full-time job at Eveleigh in 1915, making and repairing tarpaulins. Here he immediately launched a protest strike against the existing working conditions, which resulted in his transfer to the blacksmith’s shop. Outside of working hours, Ward was ‘a keen listener at street-corner political meetings’ and he walked for miles to attend election rallies, particularly if the speaker was opposed to Labor. In such cases he would organize ‘other boys of the neighborhood’ to disrupt the meeting. Having accomplished this end, he would ‘jump on a box’ and reopen the meeting on behalf of the Labor Party, even though he

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68 Interview with McKell, 1983.
69 Radi, Spearritt and Hinten, Biographical Register, pp. 38-9.
71 Scates, A New Australia, p. 11.
was not yet a member. Soon afterwards, when he reached the age of sixteen, Ward joined the Party’s Surry Hills branch, at the earliest age permissible by the Party’s rules.72

Such civic engagement did not simply build on community and labour movement networks. It also drew on previously successful collaboration between railway workers, their unions, the TLC and the ALP. Most significantly, the McGowan Labor Government’s fulfillment of electoral promises and workers’ demands for increased public employment and improved conditions and pay, entrenched workers’ expectations that Labor governments would conform to generalized norms of reciprocity. Such expectations were well-founded. In May 1915, a Political Labor League deputation to the Railway Minister requested an amendment to the Railway Act to provide for a universal eight hour day and a minimum wage of ten shillings per day for all employees over twenty-one. A year later the Government passed the Eight Hours Act which compelled the NSW Industrial Court to enforce a standard of eight hours per day or forty-eight hours per week.73

Concurrently, industrial co-operation increased in the railway workshops, particularly between 1915 and 1917, when Eveleigh’s employees took advantage of labour shortages by engaging in extensive output restriction and industrial action.74 This partly reflected the social disharmony which followed various government war-time measures, one of the most important being a freeze on wages, which rejected traditional norms of state sponsored meliorism.75 In part, too, such industrial action responded to the changes that were made by the NSW Department of Railways and Tramways to the way work was organized and supervised in its workshops in order to exert greater control over labour. Against the backdrop of eight strikes mounted by workshop employees between March and April 1916, the largest of which involved 442 employees, leading railway administrators began an industrial efficiency campaign that attacked what was disparagingly referred to as the 'slowing down movement'. In November, the Deputy Chief Commissioner of Railways, James Fraser told a meeting of employees at the Locomotive and Carriage and Wagon Shops that he had recently dealt with forty-eight strikes and stop-work meetings, and that part of the works was still paralyzed by a two-month long molders strike. Workers immediately countered by forming a rank-and-file vigilance

73 Patmore, A History of Industrial Relations, pp. 322-4.
74 Patmore, ibid., pp. 305-6, pp. 335-7, pp. 338-40.
committee. Open to all union members in the workshops, this body organized mass meetings to protest against the claims of go-slow in the railways by the Arbitration Court’s judges and railway administrators.76

There can be little doubt that this solidaristic culture was sustained by the nature of the work performed by Railway and Tramway Department employees and the high degree of union membership in the workshops. As importantly, it was also influenced by a tradition of political activism that had originated with the eight hour day movement and had been reinforced by the railway workers’ successful lobbying for locomotive manufacturing during the early years of the twentieth century.

THE CONVERGENCE OF INDUSTRIAL, POLITICAL AND COMMUNITY-BASED NETWORKS OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

The costs associated with higher wages granted by the NSW Industrial Court in 1915 and free transport of troops and war materials, led the NSW Department of Railways and Tramways introduce a new system of job records into its railway and tramway workshops in 1915 as a way of increasing output. This effort was actively and successfully opposed by railway and tramway unions in June 1915, as was a similar attempt made exactly one year later. In both cases, unions were able to thwart such initiatives by lobbying the Labor Minister for Railways through their Party connections. The railway and tramway workers’ apparently strong industrial position was, however, predicated on the existence of Labor in government, as they were to realize in 1917 following the election of a conservative Nationalist Government.77

Not surprisingly, when the Department introduced a new time-keeping system into its workshops on 20 July 1917, despite previous assurances that conditions of labour would not be altered during the war, workers immediately represented it as ‘the thin end of the wedge’ for the implementation of F.W. Taylor’s system of management. Unlike the time sheets which they had

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76 Mr. Justice Curlewis, Report of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Effects of the Workings of the System known as the Job and Time Cards System introduced into the Tramways and Railways Workshops of the Railways Commissioners, N.S.W. Parliamentary Papers (PP), 1918, vol. 6, p. 9; Budget, 1 March 1917, pp. 230-1, pp. 233-4; James Fraser, ‘Address by Mr. Fraser (Deputy Chief Commissioner) to Employees at the Locomotive and Carriage and Wagon Shops, Eveleigh, 23 November 1916’, pp. 3-5 [Courtesy ML]; Patmore, A History of Industrial Relations, pp. 339-40.
themselves previously been responsible for filling out, the new card system was to be entirely
administered by the large numbers of newly appointed shop foremen who were distrusted by the
workers. 78 This, coupled with the Railway Commissioners refusal to negotiate with unions over
the card system’s implementation, fueled one of the biggest industrial upheavals in Australian
history, one which harnessed networks of civic engagement and norms of reciprocity to restrain
opportunism and ensure solidarity. 79

Initially, aggrieved workers tried to resolve the dispute by mobilizing labour movement
networks. Following a number of mass meetings, one of which represented over seventy-five
unions, E.J. Kavanagh, the Secretary of the TLC and Member of the NSW Legislative Council
(the NSW Parliament’s Upper House) was dispatched to lead a deputation to the Railway
Commissioners in an effort to persuade them to withdraw the time cards. But in the face of
absolute intransigence on the part of these administrators, 1,100 tramway workers and 3,000
Eveleigh workers down their tools, followed soon afterwards by the railway firemen and
locomotive engine-drivers. Two days later, a mass meeting of the ARTSA and the Sydney
branch of the Locomotive Engine Drivers Association made a formal decision to withdraw all
labour from the transport service from 2nd August. A joint conference of the major unions
involved in the dispute then transferred control over industrial and political action to a Strike
Defence Committee (SDC) made up of delegates from all these unions and the TLC. On 6
August, official strike notice was given and by the end of the week the number of strikers had
grown from 5,780 to 10,000. The strike then spread to other unions and by 22 October
approximately 97,500 workers had become involved. Only 15,000 of the NSW Railways and
Tramways Department's 48,000 employees did not strike. This industrial action was also
accompanied by daily mass demonstrations involving hundreds of thousands of people in
Sydney and also in the States’ other industrial centers. 80 This rapid industrial and political
mobilization was made possible by the interlocking networks of civic engagement, civic
traditions of collaboration and norms of reciprocity that had evolved over the preceding decades.
As Stan Jones described it:

generally Lucy Taksa, ‘Defence Not Defiance: Social Protest and the NSW General Strike of 1917’, Labour History,
no. 60, May 1991, pp. 16-33.
80 Markey, In Case of Oppression, p. 106; Lang, I Remember, pp. 254-5; Turner, Industrial Labor and Politics,
pp. 146-7; Mark Hearn, Working Lives: A History of the Australian Railways Union (NSW Branch), Hale and
343.
the families of the strikers became closer to each other and the families of those who didn’t go on strike correspondingly became closer too. One had feelings of being in the fight and the others had some degree of guilt … these factors brought people together. Not that there were too many families whose men didn’t take part in the strike.  

Labor Parliamentarians who were now in Opposition, also threw their support behind the strikers by criticizing the Government's failure to settle the rapidly escalating dispute.  

The Nationalists’ unwillingness to conform to norms of reciprocity that had become entrenched throughout years of Labor government effectively transformed what was essentially a struggle over industrial rights into one over public and social rights and entitlements, as well as over the role of the state. The resulting protest against what was perceived as political oppression involved an extremely broad cross-section of the community.  

Public meetings ‘of citizens’ were held throughout NSW and all carried unanimous resolutions urging the Government to appoint an independent inquiry into the dispute. In Sydney, massive processions assembled at the Central Railway Station at 2pm every day, before proceeding to the Sydney Domain, the traditional site for working class recreation, spruiking and pamphleteering. On 9 August, the crowd was augmented by the strikers’ mothers, wives, daughters and sisters as well as women who were active in the ALP, many of whom had according to the Sydney Mail, walked from working class suburbs dominated by railway workers. After being organized by members of the SDC and Labor Parliamentarians, the procession departed for the Domain led by Kate Dwyer, one of the few women members of the Labor Party’s executive, at the head of a large contingent of women. Later, at Parliament House these women sent a deputation to the Acting Premier, which represented 'fifteen thousand wives of the men on strike as well as women who had entered the industrial field to earn their own living', and included Mrs. Bodkin the wife of the Secretary of the Railway Workers and General Labourers Section of the Australian Workers’ Union. It, too, made an appeal for the card system to be withdrawn pending a Royal Commission, a request that fell on deaf ears.  

The Government’s subsequent agreement to hold an inquiry into the card system, after a three month trial period was, however, accompanied by drastic action. Not only did it recruit volunteer workers to take the place of strikers, but it also warned those who did not return to

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81 Interview with Stan Jones, 1983.
82 NSWPD, 7 August 1917, pp. 449-50, p. 452.
84 The Sydney Mail, 15 August 1917; SMH, 10 August 1917; Daily Telegraph (DT), 10 August 1917; Taksa, ‘Defence Not Defiance’, p. 21; McMullin, The Light on the Hill, p.64.
work by 13 August that they would lose their seniority and ‘privileges’. On 14 August the Railway Commissioners also began dismissing all strikers for misconduct. Only 1,300 workers returned before the ultimatum expired. These men, together with those who the strikers called ‘scabs’ became known as Loyalists. Those who remained on strike became known as Lily-whites because they wore buttons on their coats adorned by a white lily. It was an identity that was recalled with pride by Leslie Best, who was a shop boy in Eveleigh working with the spark-arrestor estimators.³⁵ Three lily-whites who would later become prominent were J.B. Chifley, Prime Minister of Australia during World War Two, and the previously mentioned Eddie Ward and J.J. Cahill. Both of the latter were sacked from Eveleigh and both, too had their work cards marked with ‘Not to be re-employed’, a fate which befell 2,000 strikers.³⁶

All of the twenty unions involved in the strike were de-registered after 20 August, 1917.³⁷ A few weeks later, on 10 September, the railway and tramway dispute officially ended. The card-system was retained, strike-breakers kept their new jobs and union officials and activists were blacklisted. Those who were re-employed lost their seniority and superannuation rights.³⁸ Subsequently, in October 1917 the first of a number of loyalist unions were formed by those who were opposed to industrial militancy. Not only were these bodies registered by the NSW Industrial Commission over the ensuing three years, but the Railway Commissioners also gave them privileged access to railway premises to post notices and collect subscriptions, while being paid for normal duties.³⁹

All these actions by the Railway Commissioners, the Nationalist Government and the Arbitration Court directly challenged the citizenship of railway and tramway employees, whose combined industrial and political mobilization during the general strike not only sought to maintain autonomy and control over their own lives, but also to protect public entitlements. Such activity was based on an expectation of the state’s obligations to its citizens that had been formed by a long-standing tradition of ameliorative intervention. For as Gammage pointed out, Australians

³⁵ DT, 13 August 1917; Patmore, A History of Industrial Relations, pp. 345-6, p. 349; Interview with Leslie Best conducted by Lucy Taksa on 8 December, 1987 on behalf of the Bicentennial Oral History Project, Transcript held by the State Library of NSW, pp. 10-11.
³⁸ Holme, ibid., p. 44a, pp. 103-6a; Edmunds, Royal Commission, pp. 507-13; Curlewis, Royal Commission, Minutes of Proceedings, p. 42; Lang, I Remember, p. 255.
had been led to believe that state intervention was ‘a right’. This expectation was thwarted after Labor lost office in the March election of 1917. In short, the new conservative government encroached on prevailing notions of public, social and individual rights because it failed to mitigate the ‘real inequality in the market’ through the ‘liberal exercise of state power’. Hence, when the Nationalist Government fulfilled its promise for an inquiry by appointing Justice Curlewis to investigate the card system in 1918, the Judge was forced to admit that ‘there existed in the minds of the men an apprehension … that to give evidence before the Commission would be prejudicial to them.’ Not surprisingly from their perspective, this inquiry found that the card system had not been detrimental to the workers.

SOCIAL CAPITAL AND CITIZENSHIP AFTER THE GENERAL STRIKE

The continued employment of ‘loyalists’ in the railway services had a profound impact on the stock of social capital available to Eveleigh’s employees. J.B. Chifley said that it left ‘a legacy of bitterness and a trail of hate.’ Loyalist unions divided the workshops where loyalists and lily-whites refused to talk to each other or socialize during lunch-breaks. Many workers who joined the Eveleigh workshops in later decades recalled the continuing hostilities caused by this event and the way this situation hindered collective action. Unable to enforce specific norms of reciprocity in the workshops, Eveleigh’s employees directed their attention to their broader networks with the ALP. On the one hand, they organized to help elect those who they believed would restore their trust and entitlements. On the other hand, successive NSW Labor Governments reciprocated by keeping their election promises to these constituents.

In addressing the new problems of collective action posed by the aftermath of the general strike and the split in the Labor party over conscription, railway workers referred to the template of political collaboration that had been provided by the McGowan Labor Government. In his 1920 election campaign John Storey reinvigorated norms of reciprocity with railway workers by pledging to undertake the electrification of the suburban railways and complete the city underground railways. This is hardly surprising given Storey’s close associations with

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McGowan. Like the latter, he had been a boilermaker, a prominent member of the Boilermakers Society during the late nineteenth century, and foundation member of the Labor Party. When Labor won the 1910 election, he became McGowan’s confidant and the chair of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works.95 Once elected in March 1920, Storey immediately responded to the unions’ demand for re-registration by passing the *Trade Unions Registration Act* and also their appeals for a royal commission by appointing Justice Edmunds in October 1920 to conduct an inquiry into the administration, control and economy of the Railway and Tramway Service. In February 1922, Justice Edmunds reported on the victimization of those 1917 strikers who had regained their jobs. But before the Labor Government had the opportunity to deal with these findings Storey died in office and his successor, together with the Government was defeated at the polls in 1922.96

Meanwhile, the continuing bitterness in the workshops, led the ARTSA’s successor, the Australian Railways Union to step up its political campaign in the ALP and at its annual state conferences against the continued existence of the loyalist unions. Both matters were directly addressed by the Leader of the NSW ALP, J.T. Lang in his election campaign of 1925. And on his victory in May, Lang immediately moved to fulfill his promises by attempting to eliminate loyalist unions from the schedule of industrial unions contained in his Government’s Industrial Arbitration (Amendment) Bill. Subsequently, Lang introduced the *Railways Amendment and Reinstatement Act* in December of that year to restore the victimized railway and tramway employees’ rights and entitlements. As Lang described it, ‘That was our Xmas present to the Lily-Whites’.97

Lang’s actions gained him the loyalty of railway and tramway employees. Eight hundred attended a dinner in his honor in 1926. In Lang’s opinion, ‘What seemed to please them most was that the Labor Government was honoring its election pledges.’ The locomotive engine drivers went further by amending their union’s constitution to enable Lang to become a life-long member.98 Lang, in turn, introduced a bill in 1927, which amended the *Railways Act* so that

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employee representatives could be included on the newly formed Railway and Tramway Commission.99

Lang’s efforts on behalf of railway workers, while successful, were subject to the vagaries of electoral politics. When he lost the 1927 election, the Bavin Government moved rapidly to undo his work vis-à-vis the reinstated Lily-Whites. On his re-election in 1930, Lang once more restored their rights. During this second period in government, which lasted until 1932, Lang again showed himself to be responsive to the concerns of railway workers and their unions. As both Premier and Minister for Railways, he protected the industrial awards of railway employees that had been threatened by the previous conservative government.100 He also personally intervened into specific disputes between railway employees and the management that were brought to his attention through ALP networks.101 In April 1932, he directly fulfilled the demands of Eveleigh’s employees by abolishing both the card and bonus systems that had been implemented during and immediately after the general strike.102

CONCLUSION

The Eveleigh workshops not only represented the heart of the NSW railway system, but also pumped the life-blood into the surrounding working class communities. Networks of civic engagement that developed during the late nineteenth century between Eveleigh’s first generation of employees and the institutions of the labour movement produced norms of reciprocity that resulted in extensive co-operation not just in the industrial, but also the political arenas. The expansion of the economy and the state’s role in it during the 1880s, coupled with mobilization by workers and their industrial and political representatives, all helped to expand Eveleigh’s operations. In turn, greater employment opportunities for blue collar workers increased their residential occupation of the surrounding districts where they formed dense horizontal networks based on common experiences of class and strong ties of family, religion, ethnicity, occupation and friendship.

These associations provided the framework for citizenship at Eveleigh where strong interpersonal ties enabled workers to act collectively to protect and improve workplace conditions. Weaker ties based on union membership and involvement with the TLC and ALP

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reinforced this solidarity by encouraging the pursuit of broader entitlements to employment, freedom of association and access to public resources. Some, who used their rights to organize in both the industrial and political arenas, became prominent politicians and in this capacity they enhanced the social capital available to Eveleigh’s employees through their personal involvement in the community and their policies, once elected to parliament. The majority, though, used their rights at the polling booth, and in doing so also augmented the community’s social capital by establishing expectations of reciprocity. The McGowan Labor government repaid this trust by directly responding to the demands made by Eveleigh’s employees or by protecting and promoting their industrial interests. In doing so it established a civic tradition, which was maintained by subsequent Labor Governments, thus providing a clear demonstration of the connections between social capital, politics and the emergence of the welfare state in early twentieth century Australia. Eveleigh effectively provided a landscape in which the politics of government converged with the politics of work, home and the street.